

ADDED VALUES IN THE TOPICS AND MATERIALS FOR CERTAIN ENGLISH SUBJECTS

Peter Angkasa

English Department, Maranatha Christian University, Bandung

Peter_angkasa@yahoo.com

Abstract: This paper puts emphasis on the importance of providing the teaching of English with topics and materials containing added values. The implication is that while we teach the four skills of the language, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, we should also educate our students. Some values that are worthy for life such as responsibility, integrity, and other moral values, should be given a big portion in the teaching of English. This paper is also provided with examples of appropriate topics (titles) and materials for certain English subjects. Although this idea can be implemented in all the four skills of the English language, this paper will mainly concentrate on the topics and materials for merely two subjects, namely argumentative conversation and grammar, especially in creating examples of topics and sentences that have positive added values. It is hoped that this paper will help to improve the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language, particularly in Indonesia.

Keywords: *material development, topic, title, 'correct sentences', added value, moral value, behaviour*

Introduction

Nobody believes that people nowadays are as honest as they once were. Crime rate has increased. Mutilation, sexual harassment, rapes, violent robberies, vandalism, drug abuse, frauds, bullying by motor-cycle gangsters, human trafficking, traffic and other violations have drastically increased both in quality and in quantity. Moreover, in spite of the fact that there have been tremendous advances in technology, ecological system has been disturbed. Due to people's carelessness in throwing rubbish carelessly and illegal logging, more and more cities in Indonesia are inundated not only when there is heavy rain but when there is only small rain as well. Traffic jams in greater cities of Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya, to mention but a few, have increasingly disrupted the pollution index and thus worsened the quality of lives of their residents. Jovan claims "*the importance of implementing the six pillars of characters in education, namely trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship*". I suggest that teachers should provide those values in designing the topics and materials for certain English subjects which may help both to alleviate or mitigate negative characters and to elevate positive characters and proper behaviour. There should be some sort of indoctrination or even brainrinsing and brainwashing to make the students accustomed to prefer doing positive things to committing to negative things. To find out how it should be carried out, proceed to the following discussion.

Choosing Topics For Argumentative Conversation That Contain Added Values

In this paper, I suggest that topics for argumentative conversation should have added values, meaning that they should contribute to the improvement of proper behaviour and promotion of positive aspects of life. Albeit we know that a topic or a title for argumentative conversation in class may vary, we have to choose one that emphasizes on the direction towards positive values instead of negative ones. A topic or a title for argumentative conversation like 'Smoking', may vary. It may be 1. Smoking 2. Is smoking harmful? 3. Smoking is harmful 4. Smoking is absolutely harmful. The first title has a wide scope and it is possible that two students discussing such a topic or title will both agree that smoking is pleasurable and that there are hardly any side effects and that it is not really necessary to stop smoking. In spite of the fact that the second title bears the word 'harmful', it is not really effective in making the students draw the conclusion that smoking is harmful because it is a general question which may have an alternative response. Compared with the first and the second titles, the third title is more assertive. It does not give an option but a confirmation from the teacher that smoking has harmful effects. The last one should be the most appropriate title to reach our target since it has no empathy for smoking but an emphasis on the harmful effects of smoking. Having said that, I think there should be some sort of guidance and direction before the students start the conversation. As a general rule, in argumentative conversation, there must be two sides with contrasting points of view. There must be pros and cons during such a conversation; otherwise, it may be a monotonous colloquy. However, in the wrap-up, both sides should have wrath for smoking and its horrible impacts on the smokers themselves and on passive smokers. In other words, both sides should finally agree to the given title that 'Smoking is absolutely harmful'. Teachers should never present a topic like 'The advantages of smoking'. The following topics or titles that contain added values have been selected for one semester of 'Argumentative Conversation'.

1. Smoking is absolutely harmful
2. Never try to take narcotic drugs
3. Gambling is a sin
4. Littering is an anti-social deed
5. Always obey traffic rules
6. Law enforcement is imperative
7. Do not ever cheat!
8. Let's conserve our natural resources!
9. Helping the needy is indeed a needful deed
10. Urgent warning of global warming
11. Illegal logging is a serious crime
12. No more bullying!
13. Enormous advantages of 'reduce, reuse, recycle'
14. Going to work by mass public transportation is a must.

Jordan worries about *post-graduate students' inability to express themselves* (p. 45) but for students of the English department, it may be different. I am of the opinion that the topics or titles above are also appropriate for a composition class for one semester. In giving the marks to the students, the teacher should give the students a better mark if the students comply with the teacher's advice to create ideas that comprise added values.

TEACHING GRAMMAR THAT CONTAIN ADDED VALUES

Whenever we teach grammar to our students (whatever the pattern is), it is highly recommended that the examples we give to our students should also contain added values. All the examples in bold contain such positive values. Never should we give examples like the ones marked with (X)!

1. Verbs that require an infinitive or an -ing form in the complement

All of us should reduce, reuse, and recycle any used objects or materials.

(X) I intend to throw the rubbish into the river.

We appreciate the students' coming in time to every lecture.

(X) He is considering cheating in the examination because he has not studied anything.

We object to buying illegal products because we know that we have to abide by the law.

(X) They approved of his committing adultery.

2. Participles

We have begun to raise money for charity.

(X) They have drunk too much alcohol so that they are not afraid of anyone .

3. Necessity, usually for repair or improvement

For the sake of the nation, inappropriate rules and laws need to be revised.

(X) Smoking cigarettes does not need prohibiting.

4. Ability

We know how to conserve energy and we will do it constantly.

(X) We know how to bully junior students because we have done it many times.

5. Logical conclusions

My classmate must be conducting a research seriously.

(X) My friends must be smoking comfortably in the lavatory.

6. Advisability

We had better not buy smuggled goods although they are much cheaper.

(X) We had better avoid paying tax because our colleagues also do so.

7. Question forms for invitations and customs

Would you like to participate in raising fund for the poor tomorrow?

(X) Would you like to gamble with us this evening?

Do you like to read good books and journals every day?

(X) Do you like to take part in a drunken brawl?

8. Preference

I would rather buy original cassettes so that the singers and the bands get their due royalty.

(X) I would rather fake my employer's signature on the cheque because he will be ignorant of the fraud.

I would rather that you donated your blood regularly.

(X) I would rather that you made a fraudulent insurance claim.

9. Conditions

If I earn a lot of money, I will give monthly donation to the orphanage in my neighbourhood.

(X) If I had a lot of money, I would certainly play truant and spend my money lavishly.

10. Desires

I wish that I had been richer and given those beggars and tramps more money and paid for their education.

(X) I wish that I had stolen her highly sophisticated cellular telephone.

11. Contrary-to-fact statements

If I were a doctor, I would help the Tsunami victims more efficiently and effectively.

(X) If I were you, I would try to use drugs to reduce grief for unrequited love.

12. Subjunctives

I insist that nobody throw rubbish into the river.

(X) I demand that cigarettes not be banned.

13. Impersonal expressions

It is essential that black campaigns be forbidden.

(X) For the sake of our party, it is necessary that the original electoral register be cunningly manipulated.

14. Causatives

We had the casualties well taken care of although we had to spend much time, money, and energy.

(X) I will have my ex-darling mutilated because I am envious of her new boyfriend.

15. Negative imperatives

Would you please not make bogus banknotes with this sophisticated printer!

(X) Would you please not help the helpless refugees!

16. Passives

Running a red light should be severely punished.

(X) Running a red light is fun, especially when we are not fined by the traffic policeman around.

17. pronouns

Let us help those poor children although they are neither our siblings nor our relatives!

(X) Let me put my banana peel on the floor and let her slip and fall down!

18. Relative pronouns

The roomboy who found 10 million dollars returned the money to the owner without demanding a reward.

(X) The man who harassed the teenager was released without any punishment for his guilt.

(All the grammatical patterns are based on Barron's How to Prepare for The TOEFL).

Although the students can write correct sentences according to the pattern, they do not have the right to get a good mark if they do not create 'right' sentences that contain bright ideas. They will even get a zero if they write wicked, malicious, worthless ideas or suggestions like the above sentences that are marked with (X). On the other hand, if they write sentences that contain useful ideas or suggestions like the sentences in bold type, they may get the maximum mark, namely ten points. If their sentences are correct according to the patterns but they do not contain any ideas that are beneficial to mankind, they may get a maximum of six points providing that they do not contain wickedness, malice, or negative insinuation. Wharton and Race state that "*it is necessary to tell the students about marking criteria for the test in advance*". (P. 109) The following sentences, for example, have correct grammar but each of them will get only six points since according to the criteria the teacher has set beforehand, they lack the added values revealed above:

(a) The President phoned the Vice-President.

(b) The cat ate the bird.

(c) The beetle was squashed by my brother.

(Groth: P. 60)

Structure drills or sentences that are continually repeated must surely be embedded in the students' minds. They will remember not only the grammatical patterns but also the ideas contained in them. Being fully embedded in the students' minds, wise, witty, and useful ideas, to a greater or less extent, will miraculously positively influence their behaviour. This will work more or less like brainrinsing or brainwashing. Brainrinsing has a negative connotation and so does brainwashing since they usually embody coercive pressure and vehement torture. They are done to enemies to make them reveal their allies' secrets or to change their political or religious ideas. The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary defines brainrinsing as "*technique of creating a mental climate by immobility and constant verbal pressure*" while brainwashing is defined as "*the changing of a person's political or religious ideas by relentless indoctrination often to the point of mental torture*". (P. 116) However, in this respect, we should respect our 'brainrinsing and brainwashing method' of teaching since it is designed neither to upset anyone nor to disrupt anything. In other words, there is neither pressure nor torture except if guidance and direction towards the creation of positive values and repudiation of negative aspects were construed as pressure and torture. Moreover, the accrued impact even benefits the students themselves and mankind in general.

Conclusion

Through the examples throughout the discussion above, it is apparent that teachers or lecturers need to give forceful indoctrination or even to 'brainrinse' or 'brainwash' the students by providing them with do's and don'ts that may greatly influence them to do or act positively. To a certain extent, indoctrination is not favourable since it is apt to restrict one's freedom. However, the indoctrination, brainrinsing, and brainwashing in this paper merely prohibit the students from doing negative things and invite them to do positive things. In addition, there is still room for the students to be creative, namely in creating topics, sentences, paragraphs, or even compositions or essays that influence themselves and the readers to do positive things and evade negative ones. The students' creative ability may therefore be developed with only certain restrictions.

Despite the fact that there has not been a research about the influence of reading and writing on one's behaviour, it is generally believed that one's behaviour is greatly influenced by what one reads and writes. Considering that material development "*involves the production, evaluation and adaptation of language teaching materials, by teachers for their own classrooms and by material writers for sale or distribution*" (Carter and Nuna: p.45), I would even suggest that books on the four language skills written in the future should substantially consist of examples containing added values similar to those revealed in this paper so that the teaching and learning process will be advantageous for improving not merely the students' English but their behaviour as well. Wallace stresses the importance of evaluation, stating : "*We evaluate a syllabus when we say it is 'impossible to get through', and we evaluate a course book when we say it is 'really useful and helpful'*".

Bibliography

- Carter, R and Nunan, D. 2009. *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Cayne, B.S (ed). 2008. *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*. New York. Lexicon Publications, Inc.
- Peaty, D. 1980. *Something to Talk about*. Hong Kong. Nelson.
- Groth, C. 2013. *Semantics Is Fun*. Bandung. Penerbit Alfabeta.
- Jordan, R.R. 1997. *English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Jovan. 2013. *The Importance of Values in school: Implementing Character Education*, <http://www.Libgen.org> retrieved on March 2014.
- Sharpe, Pamela J. 2007. *Barron's Practice Exercises for the TOEFL*. United States of America. Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
- Wallace, Michael J. 1988. *Action Research for Language Teachers*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Wharton, Sue and Race, Phil. 1999. *500 TIPS for TESOL*. London. Kogan Page.